



EUROCLIO

European Association of History Educators



Dealing with the Past in History Education

International Study Visits as Blogposts
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Dealing With the Past in History Education – Introduction

The project creates, empowers and increases the impact of a global core group of civil society actors that have a mission and relevant experience on the promotion of innovative and responsible history education and work on a cross-regional level to work on Dealing with the Past in History Education. This project enables this core group to learn from each other and other stakeholders during joint project meetings and international study visits. The core group members will experience first-hand how other organizations implement their mission. They will explore what history education can contribute to conflict prevention and transnational justice and identify ways to overcome the practical challenges related to dealing with conflicting memories and narratives, dealing with emotional and difficult histories, dealing with uncertainties and sensitivities. The result of this exploration will be the documentation of existing practices and practical recommendations that can be used for local and cross-regional implementation and joint advocacy on global, regional and national levels.

PROJECT AIMS

The overall objective is to create, empower and increase the impact of a global core group of civil society actors that have a mission and relevant experience on the promotion of responsible history education and work on a cross-border level on dealing with the past in history education. More specific objectives are:

- To build the professional capacity and extend the networks of leading civil society actors who work on dealing with the past in history education through a series of peer learning activities (project meetings and study visits).
- To build, provide access to and promote the use of a knowledge base consisting of teaching resources, multi-lateral textbooks, relevant stakeholders, policies and recommendations, journals, (action) research and strategies that are not yet sufficiently disseminated.
- To engage in joint advocacy to inter-governmental organizations and targeted media on regional and global levels, raising awareness amongst policy makers and civil society actors on the importance of responsible history education on dealing with the past for sustainable peace.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The work on dealing with the past in history education is done by a small group of people with a strong commitment to promote sustainable peace. It takes civil courage to challenge the problematic fixed points of view and ask critical questions in order to create empathy and mutual understanding. They are often obstructed or resisted by people in power and suspect to negative reactions by people who believe that only their interpretation is true and leave no room for alternative views.

The advantage of this project is that it will empower civil society actors to continue their work on historical dialogue, transitional justice and conflict transformation. The project will involve practitioners across a variety of regions that normally are unable to meet and learn from one another. The project partners will be able to learn from specialists that are working in the field of dealing with the past and adapt the lessons learned to promote responsible history

education, so that more history educators can work to build more peaceful societies on a day-to-day basis.

Specific expected outcomes are:

- Building capacities of civil society actors with a core mission to use history education as a tool for societies to deal with the legacies of a violent past, for conflict transformation and prevention and ultimately reconciliation. For EUROCLIO, it is important to empower organizations involved in these spheres of education because it increases the impact of our projects. Capacity building allows these civil society actors to be more effective when acting independently and with partners, and encourages international cooperation and coordination.
- These civil society actors will have larger networks because of this project. They will reach more individuals through direct and face-to-face contacts; their social capital will increase, as well as their reach and capacity to act. As these organizations become larger, they have a greater impact on their societies.
- The members of the global core group, the host organizations and other stakeholders connected will gain new insights and expanded their knowledge base on how to implement strategies related to dealing with the past through history education.
- The public-at-large will have access to an online repository (the knowledge base) of relevant practices, policies and projects that can be used for advocacy and monitoring to further develop the field, and learn from the project via regular blog posts.
- Through joint advocacy and media outreach, the project will result in increased awareness of the “abuse of history” in society as an obstacle for peace and stability amongst representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, professional volunteers, educational authorities (including inspectors, curriculum developers, and examiners), and other actors responsible for policies.
- Through additional events organized by partners and other stakeholders they will be able to increase the use of teaching tools that promote responsible approaches to history education that have the potential to transform and prevent conflicts.

The study visits will make it easier for the selected civil society organizations from the core group and the host organizations to meet with policy makers.

The Core Group

South Africa

Michael Robinson

Michael Robinson has been a secondary social studies teacher for the past 21 years. Since 2003 he has taught grades 9-12 at Houston High School in Germantown, Tennessee, where he teaches Advanced Placement Human Geography, Contemporary Issues, and Facing History and Ourselves. In 2010 he was named the National Council for the Social Studies Secondary Teacher of the Year, and in November of 2011 he was an Outstanding Educator in Residence (OER) at the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST). He was also the recipient of the 2009 and 2012 National Council for Geography Education Lesson Plan Award.

Khaled El-Masri

Khaled El-Masri is a supervisor and head of department of human sciences at the Lebanese International School, located in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, a holder of BA in Islamic Jurisprudence, and currently pursuing MA courses in education at Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Khaled has a 20 year-experience in the educational field. He has been training teaching skills to colleagues at his workplace and teachers from different Lebanese regions. In addition, he is member of the Lebanese Association for History and NEP trainer on Historical Thinking. Khaled is deeply engrossed in the curricular and pedagogic issues and concerns of teaching history.

Korea

Marios Epaminondas

Marios Epaminondas has studied Pedagogics(BA), Art and Design Education(MA), History(BA) and Educational Leadership(MA). He has worked as a teacher, museum animator, history text book author and teacher trainer. Currently he works in the Office for European and International Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. He has been a coordinator and/or a trainer/facilitator in several projects with themes related to history teaching, human rights education, intercultural learning and youth empowerment. He is currently a Board Member of the 'Association for Historical Dialogue and Research'.

India

Ineke Veldhuis-Meester

Ineke Veldhuis-Meester stood at the threshold of EUROCLIO in 1993. From the start she has been part of the Historiana Learning Team, developing innovative and multi-perspective learning activities. Currently she works for the project "Decisions & Dilemmas" on why European cooperation 'was hot' after World War II. Her basis is teaching History and Civics in a Dutch secondary school/gymnasium and at the International School in the Netherlands. Throughout her teaching life she has been a trait d'union between the University historians' world, and the Association of Teachers in History and Civics in the Netherlands (VGN); from 1997-2000 she served in the National Board. Her interest in assessment led to constructing national history exams at the National Institute for Assessment and Measurement (CITO). With 'a gang of four' she implemented a new examination system for History in secondary education throughout the Netherlands. After retirement she continues to serve as expert in

History Education in Council of Europe and EUROCLIO projects; her field of interest is multi-perspective History teaching and innovative methodology, the shaping of historical consciousness in collective memory and remembrance today.

Croatia

Clara Ramírez-Barat

Clara Ramírez-Barat is the Director of the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) Educational Policies Program. Before joining AIPR, she was a Senior Research Associate at the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), an organization with which she worked for more than four years after having served for two years as a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow. At ICTJ, Clara's research focused on different aspects of transitional justice with a special interest on media and the cultural sphere. More recently, Clara worked on the intersection between transitional justice and education, both by developing an adolescent-friendly version of the Kenyan Truth Commission's final report and as part of a broader two-year research project on Transitional Justice, Education, and Peacebuilding. Born in Madrid, Clara obtained her Ph.D. in 2007 at University Carlos III of Madrid with a thesis on transitional justice and also holds an M.A. in Philosophy from Columbia University (2002). She is currently based in São Paulo, Brazil.

Olesya Skrypnyk

Olesya Skrypnyk is a Project Administrator at the All-Ukrainian Association for History Teachers in Ukraine "Nova Doba". She administers the project "Integration through Dialogue" in Lviv, Ukraine. The Project's goal is, to overcome cultural and regional differences based on different life experiences, memories, attitudes to historical past of Ukraine and visions of its present and future development. The project aims to achieve its goal through integration of educational and psychological support to children who suffered from the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Olesya holds a BA in English Philology, and an MA in Sociology from the Ivan Franko University of Lviv.

Colombia

Senada Jusic

Senada Jusic is a historian, history teacher, author of the book "Yellow building by the river Miljacka" and co-author of pedagogical modules and materials such as "Latin bridge" and "Monument in Motion". She is a post-graduate at Sarajevo Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History. She is a board member of EUROCLIO-HIP, the history teachers' association of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has cooperated with institutions within the sphere of history (Sarajevo Institute of History, Historical Archive in Sarajevo) and other organizations (EUROCLIO, ZFD, HIA, Anne Frank House, Women to Women, CDRSEE). She is currently working on the reform of the history curriculum as a member of the commission for the reform of the curriculum of the Sarajevo Canton.

Meena Malhotra

Meena graduated from Art College and set up a graphic design studio in the early years of her career. An inherent passion for the arts and social concern, children and education brought her to The Seagull Foundation for the Arts where she heads the PeaceWorks project. She has been instrumental in giving the project the shape it has today and international recognition. PeaceWorks received the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Award in 2010.

How can History Education Help with Dealing with a Difficult Past? – Part I

Michael Robinson August 21, 2017

This is the first part of a blog post about a study visit to Cape Town, South Africa. It is the second article in a series of reports and blog posts on Dealing with the Past in History Education. A report of the visit to South Africa, written by Khaled El Masri, is available [here](#). For more information about the project, visit the project page: [Dealing with the Past in History Education](#).

It is after 9 PM, and I have just arrived in Cape Town, South Africa, for the first time. I am met at the airport by a driver that was arranged by my hotel, Frank Mountanda, a smiling, lively, funny, man who also happens to be an immigrant from Congo. As he took my luggage and was putting it in the trunk of the car, I walked up to get into the car, and he started to laugh and said, “You are welcome to drive it you want.” Without thinking I had walked up to the driver’s side of the car, which is on the opposite side of where it is in the United States. I had just done what was normal for me to do, proving that we humans definitely are creatures of habit.

The word “habit” is an interesting word. Its meaning is simple enough: it is something you regularly do that is often times hard to give up or change. It is needing to brush one’s teeth every morning before work, biting one’s finger nails, smoking cigarettes, or benignly walking to the wrong side of the car. Habits are not inherently bad; many are good, but they are most certainly difficult to change. We get used to doing a thing, and it becomes common practice. It is just what we do.

What if you grow up in a society where the social norms dictate that you separate yourself from people who look different than you, perhaps a place where white people don’t use the same public buses or bathrooms as black or colored (mixed-race) people? It is just normal life. How does a society go from changing the mindset of its people so that one group is not superior to all other groups? This has been the challenge of South Africa since ending apartheid— institutionalized racial segregation laws and practices— in the early 1990’s.

While I was visiting the South African Jewish Museum, I talked to Roz Von Zaiklitz, one of the museum’s tour guides and experts, as she reminisced about a story when she first came to South Africa from nearby Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). While standing in front of a sign on the wall entitled “Facing Reality,” she tells the story of when she was a young student, barely 18, waiting for the first time for the bus in Cape Town. When the bus stopped in front of her, she did what she always did back home, she started to board it. However, the driver stopped her and said, “Sorry but my job is more important to me than letting you get on this bus.” Roz was confused by the driver’s reaction, because all she wanted was to ride the bus to the university. She then saw the driver point to a sign. It said in Afrikaans, “SLEGS NIE-BLANKES,” or in English “Non-Whites Only.” Roz was trying to board a bus for non-whites, and this was against the law in apartheid South Africa. This was her welcome to South Africa’s reality.

Years after trying to board that bus, in 2000, Roz was standing in line with other museum employees at the opening of the South Africa Jewish Museum. They were in line to welcome their guest of honor, Nelson Mandela, as he was there to officially open the museum. Roz recalls how excited everyone was to meet the great Madiba, the name South Africans use for Nelson Mandela. She said, “We were all crying and smiling” to meet this “larger than life hero” of South Africa.

This brings me to the purpose of the trip to South Africa, which was to interview several South Africans in order to gain some understanding of the important role education plays, particularly history education, in helping the people of South Africa, young and old, deal with the difficult past of living in a post-apartheid South Africa. Joining me on this task was Khaled El Masri, a history educator from Lebanon. Our job was to pose the question, “How can history education help with dealing with a difficult past?”

Our first stop was the IJR, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, where we had the pleasure of working with and interviewing Cecyl Esau, Senior Project Leader for Building Inclusive Societies, and Lucretia Arendse, Project Leader for Education for Reconciliation. Both of them work in IJR’s Sustained Dialogue Programme. Essentially, their jobs are to put into practice the essence of our proposed question. Their work / projects revolve around dealing with South Africa’s difficult past and how to bridge the divide that apartheid created between people of different races.

“Make way for the uncle.”

In our first conversation with Cecyl Esau, he relayed a recent story of himself visiting the market. Telling his story, he started by clarifying what he meant when he said “Black South Africans.” He stated, “When I say black people in general, I mean black Africans, and coloreds, and Indians.” He said in the past “we (meaning Black South Africans) were not spoken of with familiar terms.”

I wasn’t quite sure what he meant when he said “familiar terms,” but as he continued with his story it made perfect sense. While walking through the grocery store he recalls a white mother telling her white daughter to “make way for the uncle.” The term “uncle” is used as a respectful term for older South Africans. In the past a white person would almost never have referred to a black person as “uncle.” It would have been, in Cecyl’s thoughts, too “familiar.”

It is not just young white mothers with children changing attitudes toward blacks. According to Cecyl, older whites will now make “small talk,” whereas in the past they would be more likely to ignore the black person standing or sitting next to them. Cecyl ends his story saying, “There is some movement when it comes to making overtures to other people, unlike under apartheid.”

These are just a few small indications of the positive strides made in South Africa in the past twenty years, but the work Cecyl, Lucretia Arendse, and all the others at IJR do on a daily basis helps to ensure that these small, positive stories translates to a more “fair, democratic, and inclusive” society, as their vision statement states.

Woundedness

One part of Lucretia Arendse's work deals with creating curriculum for teachers to use in order for them to have these difficult conversations with their students about the apartheid past. The purpose of such lessons is the hope that it will help with achieving the IJR's mission of promoting reconciliation and applying "human-centered approaches to socio-economic justice."

Teachers need to ask themselves: "What wounds are you carrying that make it difficult for you to be accepting to the other?"

While presenting to teachers, Lucretia and others from IJR became aware that the teachers themselves found teaching lessons about apartheid and reconciliation to be difficult and emotionally challenging. Since most of the teachers grew up in an apartheid South Africa and knew first-hand the cruelty and injustice apartheid inflicted, many of them simply did not have the ability to teach to their students what was meant to seek reconciliation.



Lucretia Arendse of the IJR (Image provided by Michael Robinson)

Lucretia recalls what teachers would tell her, "We can't give what we do not have."

Lucretia then posed the question, "What wounds are you (the teacher) carrying that make it difficult for you to be accepting to the other?" In order to teach reconciliation, teachers had to face their own "woundedness."

Teachers would need more specific training on how to go about dealing with the difficult issues they would face in their

classrooms. They needed to practice scenarios that they would face and possible solutions they could enact.

Walking with anger

It is not just teaching teachers in order for them to teach their students. The reality in South Africa is that the student's parents have the same difficulties and challenges that the teachers face in dealing with their own wounds attributed to the apartheid past. As Lucretia Arendse stated:

There is that inter generational trauma that is passed from parent to child and you wonder why children are prejudiced? How do you, as a school, get your parents on board to come along side you...you are teaching one thing in the classroom and they go home and parents are teaching them another thing.

Create an awareness.. you need to get your parents involved.

Creating a school culture where parents are an integral part of the learning process is not as easy as creating curriculum for teachers. It will require structural changes in school districts and schools to find ways to best meet the needs of their diverse student populations. It will require school leaders and community leaders to work together to find ways to bring all stakeholders together in ways that will help all involved deal with their difficult past so that the future will be one of corporation, mutual respect, and peace.

Lucretia Arendse answered our question on the importance of history education this way:

We have to understand where we come from in order not to go back there. If you are walking with anger or you are walking with shame as a white person then how does that transfer to children. This has to be taught in all subjects. We want learners to understand what was the past, an inclusive perspective of the past.

The past in South Africa just cannot be forgotten or ignored. It is the past that impacts their present and continues to frame their future. For South Africa to reach the reconciliation, hopes, and dreams of the rainbow nation it must be with confronting the difficult history of the past with tough courageous conversations in the schools, in the homes, and in the communities.

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[How can History Education Help with Dealing with a Difficult Past? – Part II](#)

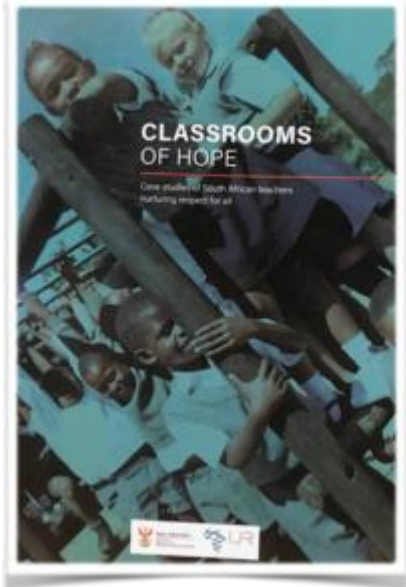
Michael Robinson September 7, 2017

This is the second part of a blog post about a study visit to Cape Town, South Africa. It is the third article in a series of reports and blog posts on [Dealing with the Past in History Education](#). The first part of this blog post is available [here](#). For more information about the project, visit the project page: [Dealing with the Past in History Education](#).

Classrooms of Hope

Working with Dylan Wray from Shikaya, a “non-profit civil society organization that recognises the crucial role that teacher can play in deepening and strengthening South Africa’s democracy,” the IJR produced a series of case studies (written by

Wray) entitled “Classrooms of Hope: Case studies of South African teachers nurturing respect for all.”



“Classrooms of Hope” by Dylan Wray (image provided by Michael Robinson)

Case Study 3 on Discrimination and Racism is a good example of the tools given to teachers on how to deal with a possibly uncomfortable situation in their classroom. In this example the black students felt that the coloured students did not want to interact with them because they believed the coloured students saw them as “lower class.” The next part of the curriculum goes through what the school and teacher did to rectify this problem, how the students responded to the teacher’s actions, and ends with reflections on the overall issue.

The many case studies in the training provide specific scenarios for new and experienced teachers to work through how best to deal with similar issues that might arise in their own classrooms. This allows the teachers who go through the training to learn, discuss, and debate best practices in dealing with these issues that have their roots in South Africa’s apartheid past. It is by leaning and using these tools that help teachers confront and effectively deal with these issues in constructive ways with their students.

In the conclusion of the “Classrooms of Hope” it states, “We spend a lot of energy trying to ensure that learners leave school as respectful, compassionate and non-racist democratic citizens. Much of the responsibility of this falls on teachers.” This is why teacher Professional Development is one of the key components to successfully being able to answer our core question on history education’s role in dealing with a difficult past. Before you teach the history, you must ensure the teachers are well-equipped with the skills, knowledge, and awareness to successfully teach this difficult and recent history.

“We are not doing enough.”

When talking with Dylan Wray, the author of “Classrooms of Hope” and executive director of Shikaya, he laid out the sobering reality of education in South Africa as well as teaching history in South Africa. According to Dylan, South Africa graduates 600,000 students annually, but a staggering 1 million students drop out of school before even graduating. Thus, the impact that history education can have on the overall populous is hampered with the large amount of drop-outs who will never receive the history education they so desperately need. Compounding this problem is the lack of importance placed on history education overall in South Africa’s schools.

According to Dylan, history is not a compulsory course in high school but rather an elective course students can opt to take or not take. Dylan bluntly stated, “History is not seen as an important subject. It will not get you a job.” Cecyl Esau, said, “There

is a dwindling number of people taking history. How is the younger generation going to learn about the past if the emphasis is only on science, math, and technology?" Therefore, improving the status of history education is just one of the several challenges Dylan, Cecyl, and others are facing in being able to teach all South Africans about their difficult past.

"I think one day there will be a change for the good."

Change for the good

However, there is some real optimism for the future. Kyle Cameron Kirby, a 12th grade student at Kensington High School, said, "I think one day there will be a change for the good."

Paola Mwamba followed up Kyle's comment with, "Not all parents got the education. We come to school we are working and talking with different races. But it is much easier for us than our parents." The students' present is much different than their parents' past. For students like Kyle and Paola, the future of South Africa is one of promise and hope.

District Six

On the last day of our visit to South Africa we visited the District Six Museum. District Six was a residential neighborhood in Cape Town that was designated as an all-white area in the 1970s by the South African apartheid government. This meant that its over 60,000 mostly black residents were forcibly removed from their homes. This traumatic and disgusting event of South Africa's history is chronicled and memorialized at the District Six Museum.

Mandy Sanger, the museum's Education Manager, said, "We work with memory in the present. In the present we help people understand how the present is explained by the past. It is nothing natural [as in a natural disaster changing the demographics]." What happened to the people of District Six shows the true inhumanity and cruelty that was apartheid. It is the hope of the museum to have as many school groups visit the museum and participate in its workshops where students confront this difficult history.

The museum struggles with funding and staffing issues. It cannot afford to bring many students from the most disadvantaged schools to the museum, and if they did have the funding for the students, they would need additional funding to have enough staff to run the workshops as well as the museum. For now most of the school groups who are fortunate enough to visit the museum are from the more affluent schools, which have the funding for such field trips. According to Mandy, some of the students at these schools are resistant to participating in the workshops.



District Six Museum (Image provided by Michael Robinson)

The reality is that for some of these students the past is too painful to face. Facing the country's history as a white South African can be quite difficult, because it can be one of shame and guilt. However, it is with workshops like the ones at District Six and the programs promoted by the IJR and Shikaya that are critical for South Africa to be able to face its difficult past and create an inclusive future for all South Africans.

It has been less than thirty years since the end of apartheid in South Africa, and real change is difficult to achieve in any society. With time and the continued efforts of the courageous people we were fortunate enough to meet and talk with, South Africa has the people, the knowledge, and the dedication to truly become the rainbow nation for all of its people.

Return to the airport.

The last morning, Frank, with his smiling face, is there to pick me up from my hotel to give me a ride to the airport. In the course of my conversations with Frank, I have learned that he has been in South Africa for a little less than twenty years, coming after the end of apartheid from the Republic of Congo. He is married to a South African woman, and they just had their third child two weeks prior to my visit. He sees South Africa as a country of opportunity, a place to make a better living than his native city of Brazzaville, Congo. He owns his own tour company, and he has high hopes and dreams for his future and his children's future in South Africa. South Africa, as he tells me, has been "very good" to him.

It is right about this time in our conversation, as we are nearing the airport, that Frank stops talking about his future and his family. He points to his left to show me

the slums. He said, "This is very sad." He was right. Seeing the slums for the first time was a bit of a reality check for me. I had arrived a few days earlier at night and did not see the slums. I had spent a day touring the Cape, seeing the beautiful coast and driving through some of South Africa's more affluent neighborhoods. I had spent the last few days in downtown Cape Town, a bustling metropolitan city like many others I had been in before, but this was my first exposure to seeing people living in slums.

It reminded me of my conversation with Dylan Wray when I had asked Dylan how South Africa was different for his children compared to the South Africa he grew up in. In response he told me what was positive for his children:

My kids go to schools where there is a very good racial mix. My one child is taught by a woman who is a coloured lady. We live in a South Africa where there are protests, and it is legal. We have a judiciary that really works.

My kids are raised today still going to a wealthy school, so their friendships are class-wise the same.

Dylan, also explained how South Africa has not changed enough.

The lady that cleans our house. The gardener that comes twice a week from Mali. The grounds staff... Their (his children's) interactions of power (with black people) were the same that I had...The Geography hasn't changed. Most black people (that my children interact with) are mainly serving you.

You can drive in Cape Town and back to the airport, leave from this wealth and you will see the shacks....it will look like it did during apartheid.

So as I was getting ready to leave South Africa I was finally faced with its harsh reality: it is a developing country trying to come to grips with its discriminatory racial past while also faced with thousands of its citizens living in the depths of poverty. It is imperative for all South Africans to understand that the scares of apartheid are still very real and shocking. It makes the work of everyone I meet seem more relevant and important.

This is the second part of a blog post about a study visit to Cape Town, South Africa. It is the third article in a series of reports and blog posts on [Dealing with the Past in History Education](#). A report of the visit to South Africa, written by Khaled El Masri, is available [here](#).

Issues and challenges of History Education in the Republic of Korea – Part I

Marios Epaminondas September 15, 2017

This is the first part of a blog post on Marios Epaminondas' study visit to Seoul, Korea, which took place from 22-28 July 2017 (N.B.: In this report the terms Korea, Republic of Korea and South Korea are used interchangeably unless stated otherwise). It is the fourth article in a series of reports and blog posts related to the project "Dealing with the Past in History Education". The previous articles, on the study visit to Cape Town, can be found [here](#).

Report prepared by Marios Epaminondas

1. Introduction

The study visit took place within the framework of the Northeastern Asian History Foundation (NAHF)-EUROCLIO joint Conference entitled "Multiperspectivity and Tolerance in History Teaching". This gave opportunities for interaction with a variety of actors who are working or cooperating with the Foundation. These included members of the Board and the staff of the Foundation, researchers and history teachers. At the same time, the structure of the programme, which was very tight and demanding, limited the possibilities for meetings with individuals who were not part of the activities prepared by the Foundation. In addition to the information gathered from the activities prepared by the Foundation, the available, unstructured time was used for visits to Museums. This provided a broader understanding of the social mechanisms of memorialization in the South Korean Society.

A brief calendar of activities can be helpful for establishing the context within which data for the compilation of the Report were gathered. The EUROCLIO delegates had their first meeting at Seoul on Sunday the 23rd of July 2017. We got to know each other and the representatives of the host organization and we established a common code of contact. On Monday 24th five Parallel Teaching Workshops were held by EUROCLIO delegates at Choong-Ang High School for students 15-17 years old. In the afternoon a round table discussion on "Issues and Challenges of History Education in Europe and South Korea" was held. On Tuesday 25th the main body of the NAHF-EUROCLIO International Conference "Multiperspectivity and Tolerance in History Teaching" was held. It included three sessions: 1. Conflicts over History and History Education 2: Citizenship and History Education, 3: One History, Multiple Perspectives.



EUROCLIO delegates and NAHF representatives – round table discussion (Image provided by Marios Epaminondas)

On Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th we had the opportunity to be acquainted with the history and the culture of Korea in a more hands-on way. On the 26th a field trip with a tour guide was organized to the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) separating South and North Korea. At the morning of the 27th we had the chance to participate in a Tea Ceremony reflecting traditional Korean modes of social interaction which are, to a large extent, not practiced by new

generations of Koreans. The day was concluded with the participation to a teacher training seminar with Korean history teachers hosted by Dokdo Training Institute. The session had two lectures from EUROCLIO delegates followed by a fruitful discussion with Korean teachers about issues and challenges in History Education in Korea and Europe.

The programme which was organized by the NAHF was enriched with visits to three important Museums undertaken by my own initiative. On Sunday the 23rd, along with a group of EUROCLIO colleagues, we visited the “National Museum of Contemporary History of Korea”. On Friday the 28th, I visited the “Seoul Museum of History” and the “National Folk Museum of Korea”. In addition to that, I included in my workshop with the students at Choong-Ang High School an activity to gather student’s opinions on “Why we should learn History”. I also had an in-depth interview with Assistant Professor Mrs. Mimi Lee, from the College of Education Hongik University at the time slot between the end of the Round Table Discussion on the 24th and the official dinner the same day. Finally, I used the unstructured time of the programme to hold informal discussions with EUROCLIO delegates and representatives of the Foundation about the issues related to this report. Their support and ideas were very valuable. It’s worth noting that direct conversations with Korean history teachers were extremely limited due to language and time barriers.

2. Method

The information gathered during the study visit was selected with view of supporting the extraction of answers to a basic question, which is analyzed in three sub-questions:

Basic Question: How are the “difficult parts” of Korea’s past dealt with?

Sub-questions:

- (a) Which parts of Korea's past are considered difficult and/or sensitive?
- (b) What educational programmes exist which deal with the past?
- (c) What is the notion of good history education and how does it contribute to dealing with difficult past?

Data for the report were drawn from:

- (a) Content analysis of the speeches of Conference speakers (Publication: "The NAHF –Euroclio Joint Conference on History Education: Multiperspectivity and Tolerance in History Teaching".NAHF-Euroclio.2017.) (red. All references in this report are from the booklet "The NAHF –Euroclio Joint Conference on History Education: Multiperspectivity and Tolerance in History Teaching".NAHF-Euroclio.2017")
- (b) Notes from the discussions which were held during the conference
- (c) Analysis of the opinions of the students of Choong-Ang High School during the workshop I contacted on the 23rd of July 2017
- (d) In depth interview with Assistant Professor Mimi Lee, College of Education Hongik University
- (e) Information from the visits to the "National Museum of Contemporary History of Korea", the "Seoul Museum of History", the "National Folk Museum of Korea" and the visit to the Demilitarized Zone.
- (f) Reflections from informal discussions with fellow EUROCLIO delegates and Foundation Representatives

3. Which parts of Korea's past are considered difficult and/or sensitive?

The historical issues considered "difficult" in South Korea are mainly related to the way its (historical) relations with Japan and China are presented officially, remembered and taught. Challenges also exist when organizing the education of the children of defectors from North Korea. In the former case, there is an effort initiated from the South Korean side –yet to be fruitful- to establish "shared perceptions" between Korea-Japan-China. In the latter case, there is an effort for the re-education of defectors' children so they can adapt easier to the South Korean society. Professor Lyu Seungreul from Kangwon National University, commenting on the typical pending historical issues in Korea, referred to the following: "problems with history textbooks and education, land and territorial disputes, controversies over worshiping Yasukuni Shrine, apologies and compensations for Japan's invasion and domination in terms of such activities as imprisonment, conscription and "comfort women" for the Japanese army and historical conflicts with China"(p. 39). The Yasukuni Shrine is a Japanese Shinto shrine to commemorate those who died serving the Emperor of Japan, installed in Seoul by Japanese authorities and considered by Koreans as one of the symbols of Japanese oppression. The issue of

“comfort women” and the problems describes in this context, are related to the fact that the official versions of history in the region espoused by Japan and China, is incompatible with the Korean version of history. The Korean side aspires to a dialogue which will lead to “shared perceptions” and joint textbooks which will included the rectified version of history.

This reference by Professor Lyu Seungreul, reflects potently the omnipresent fact that the “historical issues” are interrelated to current political antagonisms.

According to the presentations of the Korean speakers, the way in which Japan is currently presenting and interpreting the period during which it held Korea as a colony (1910-1945) is highly problematic. It was inferred by the speakers that the Japanese official stance is that the Japanese colonial rule brought about modernization, while it completely obscures the suppression that Korean people went through by Japanese authorities. The most sensitive part of the suppression is the “issue of ‘comfort women’ compulsory mobilized by Japanese army” (Lyu, p. 39) as sex slaves. South Koreans call, through governmental and civil society initiatives, for a dialogue. So that a narrative, which includes both modernizing attempts and suppression practices by the Japanese authorities, can be jointly established.

In addition to the above, historical controversies are unearthed due to the on-going dispute about the island on Dokdo. Japan is laying claims on the island whereas Korea is working towards the collection of historical evidence which underpins its Korean past and demonstrates the irrefutable ownership of the island by Korea. Another issue of historical/geographical character concerns the name of the Sea between Korea and Japan. Korea considers the right name to be “Eastern Sea” whereas Japan calls it “Japan Sea”. On this issue possibilities for dialogue are more limited since historical claims are directly linked with issues of sovereignty. Each side is working for the promotion of their claims trying to convince third parties about their validity. A way to measure success in this effort, according to information gathered from NAHF staff is the increase in the percentage of maps worldwide presenting the sea between Korea and Japan as “East Sea”.

It is obvious that the current political tensions between South Korea and Japan are feeding the debate/conflict over history. Vice versa, the historical issues under dispute impede the dialogue on current issues from being fruitful. From the statements made by Korean colleagues, as well as from the narratives presented in the National Museum of Contemporary History of Korea and the Seoul Museum of History, there seems to be openness within society to discuss critically various issues related to modern history of Korea (especially the developments within South Korea after the war of 1950-1953). However, such dialogic approach is not easy to be adopted with the official Japanese claims about their rule of Korea. As Assistant Professor Mimi said, there are debates from different points of view on many issues of modern history but “when it comes to confronting Japanese claims, we stand as one”.

A quite particular public action encapsulating vividly the trauma existing within Korean society from the Japanese rule concerns the fate of a landmark building constructed during Japanese colonial period: the Japanese Government-General Building. It was erected in the Gyeongbokgung Palace during 1916-1926 at the

expense of the Palace's architectural integrity. This building served, after Korea's liberation, as the main building of the Republic of Korea central government (1948-1982) and then it housed the National Museum of Korea. On August 15th, 1995, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Korean liberation, the building, which was considered a symbol of the Japanese rule, was torn down. At a plaque outside the Seoul Museum of History this action's rationale is explained like this: "Its demolition was part of an initiative to remove the vestiges of Japanese colonial rule and the restoration of the national spirit of Korea".

Tensions exist also with the Chinese presentation and interpretation of ancient/pre-modern History. Mrs. Sun Joo Kang explained in her speech that "Koreans consider themselves the heirs of Koguryo state which occupied much modern Northeast China from the seventh to eleventh century (...). However, Chinese historians claim that Koguryo is part of Chinese history"(p.71). In an unofficial discussion, a Korean colleague explained that Koreans are bitter by the Chinese attempts to "steal their history". As the colleague pointed out, it is unquestionable that the areas which were under the control of Koguryo Dynasty, are currently Chinese territories. However, it is not right on behalf the Chinese authorities and historians to deny the fact that these areas were once ruled by a Korean Dynasty. Researching the ancient history of the region of Korean Peninsula and beyond to locate and highlight its Korean heritage are among the activities undertaken by Korean researchers to support the abovementioned effort.

This concludes the first part of this report on Marios Epaminondas' study visit to Seoul, the full report will be uploaded in two parts. More information about the project "Dealing with the Past in History education" is available [here](#).

Issues and challenges of History Education in the Republic of Korea – Part II

Marios Epaminondas September 22, 2017

This is the second installment of a blogpost on Marios Epaminondas' study visit to Seoul, Korea, which took place from 22-28 July 2017. (N.B: In this report the terms Korea, Republic of Korea and South Korea are used interchangeably unless stated otherwise) It is the fifth article in a series of reports and blogposts related to the project "Dealing with the Past in History Education". The preceding blogpost on Marios' visit can be found [here](#).

3. Which parts of Korea's past are considered difficult and/or sensitive?

Educating the children of North Korean defectors which have moved to South Korea either directly or through third counties, mainly China, is also an issue related with the understanding of the past. In this case, there is no dispute or attempted dialogue with North Korean authorities. Rather, there are efforts to educate the people who chose to come to South Korea in ways that will help them integrate in society. Apart

from issues related to language (for the children who spend many years in China on the way to South Korea) there is a need for a new understanding of the recent past. Teacher Hyeonjin Chae working in Hangeore High School which welcomes North Korean defector children said that this particular school offers both the regular curriculum and a specialized one to help defector students adapt and be transferred eventually to regular South Korean schools. During their history class, they tackle particular issues which are presented in different ways in North and South Korea. Methodologically, the school adopts group work and dialogue. Content wise, there is still dialogue; nevertheless the South Korean narrative should eventually prevail. For example, regarding the very crucial issue of Korean war, about which in North Korea it is taught that South Korea invaded first, teacher Chae explained that “I provided students with some documents that supported the argument that the Korean war started when North Korea invaded South Korea” (p.125).

4. What educational programmes exist which deal with the past?

South Korea’s education is divided in three levels: Elementary School six years, Middle School three years and high School three years. According to Sun Joo Kang, Professor at Gyeongin National University of Education (p. 61-62) the Korean national syllabus has changed several times since its first release in 1948. A crucial change occurred in 2011 when a nine year common basic and three year selection based curriculum was adopted. According to this curriculum, students study Korean History at the primary school, middle and high school levels each with different themes, depth and standards. World history is compulsory in Middle school, whereas in High School students choose from a variety of social science courses which include Korean History, East Asian History and World History. This entailed that Korean History was not compulsory in High School. However, historiographical and territorial disputes with Japan and China sparked reactions among the public and the politicians which disagreed with the fact that the subject of Korean History was only optional.

“As a result, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) just before implementing the 2011 curriculum, in which all courses in High School were to be electives strongly recommended that High School should teach Korean history as if it were a compulsory subject.

Korean history has always been more prominent in school curricula than world history because History Education has been viewed as a means for establishing national consciousness and cultural transmission” (Sun Joo Kang, p. 62).

The prevalence of the “task” of History Education to instill national consciousness was evident in all formal and informal discussions held in the framework of the Conference. There was also a discussion about the contribution of history education to the enhancement of civic competences and promotion of active citizenship. These directions of history education, as described by the researchers who studied the official deliberations on the subject are, to a large extent, in line with the information gathered from 35 3rd Grade students of Choong Ang High School. Answering the question “Why should we learn history” the students gave responses clustered around four main areas: a) to provide lessons from the past in order to avoid repeating mistakes, (b) to construct a national identity, (c) to orientate the citizens as

to who are they and where they should go and (d) to understand/respect “others” and live in peace with them.

Apart from the educational programmes offered in schools, another arena in which South Korea’s relation with its past is negotiated and presented are the Museums. Seoul has a very rich Museum scene covering themes related not only to political, but also the cultural and social history of the country. The Museums are generally well structured, attractive and rich in content. The narratives underlying the collections are diverse and are offering the chance for reflection. It is interesting to note that post war history of South Korea is presented in a dynamic and critical way. One could have assumed that in an attempt to compare favorably the liberal/capitalistic system espoused in South Korea with the communist/authoritarian system of North Korea the former would somehow be idealized. On the contrary, the development of South Korea’s political life is portrayed as an on-going struggle towards democratization. Of course this can be perceived as implicit presentation of the assets of an open society, nevertheless it is done in an honest and “self-critical” manner, the “self” being the governments in South Korea after 1953. An interesting instance of this reflective approach occurred during the visit at the Demilitarized Zone when the tour guide was commenting on the efforts for dialogue with North Korea. She stated that the progress of dialogue is contingent not only to the stance to the North Korean Government but also to the willingness of the South Korean government. This is interesting because usually tour guides are echoing the official point of view and attribute lack of progress to a dialogue solely to the “other side”.

5. What is the notion of good history education and how does it contribute to dealing with difficult past?

The emphasis on the establishment of corrected/shared perceptions of the past is prevailing in the discussions about History Education. This brings the content at the center of the discussions. The issues of history didactics and teacher training remain secondary, nevertheless there seems to be an upward trend in the interest of their development. Professor Lyu Seungreul, Kangwon National University explained that the current system is focusing on memorization and the success in particular University entrance exams leaving limited space for agency to the students. Recounting opinions withheld by some teachers which are in line with his own vision for the future of history education he says “...the way in which the learners are perceived must change: they should not be seen as passive beings accepting historical research but as main agents of historical interpretation” (p. 46).

The struggle for the “right content” is consuming much of the energy of many of the official stakeholders dealing with history and history education. The rectification of history is one of the main tasks undertaken by the NAHF. According to the line of argument expressed by the members of the NAHF a good History Education should be based on “shared perceptions” of the history of Northeast Asia. These shared perceptions should/could be established through a dialogue –of historians- between Korea-Japan-China. Such shared perception(s) will consequently allow the creation of joint textbooks which in turn will be the core of history class. The effort is difficult; however, there were attempts towards this direction, which were commented positively by Professor Lyu: “There have been active solidary movements between Korea and Japan to overcome historical conflicts and bring reconciliation. To ensure

cooperation between individuals and institutions, this happened on a private, non-Governmental level: history researchers and educators have conducted joint research to bridge the gap in historical perceptions” (p. 40).

According to Professor Lyu, the quality of the “shared perceptions” sought after shall be judged not only by their historical accuracy but also by the values they would convey. They should “fulfil the universal values ultimately pursued by East Asia and even humanity, such as world peace, human rights and democracy (...), must eliminate historical perceptions that dignify invasion and colonization, justify war and rationalize violence and suppression”(Lyu, p. 41). The outcome pursued gives implications of who should have the leading role in this endeavor: “Korea may play a key role in sharing historical perceptions or promoting projects for future peace and co-prosperity, due its absence of historical sins, whereas China and Japan face difficulty in and East Asian community due to their imperial sins” (Lyu, p. 43). In any case, it is not clear whether the “shared perceptions” will be a commonly accepted narrative or “recognizing the Korean perspective and the Japanese perspective, for instance, are different and educating students to understand why these differences in perspective exist” (Lee, p. 58). On top of that, it is acknowledged that the issue of content is not covered only by the relations between Korea, Japan and China. There are open discussions about ethnocentrism, tackling of multiple identities within South Korea and the balance between national and world history.

Whereas the focus is on content, the Foundation officials, researchers and history teachers share the opinion that History Education is not only a matter of content. The discussions in the conference provided clear indications that there is a need, especially on behalf of the teachers, for more emphasis on the methodology of history teaching and the adoption of more student centered approaches. An area which seems to receive much attention in Korea concerns the so called “civic history education”. The rationale is this: “‘Education to raise citizens’ is the basic concept behind civic education, ‘history education to raise citizens’ provides civic education using historical facts and fundamentally aligns with the nature of civic education” (Kim, p. 181). A question which arises is whether history education can be used to promote civic competences without losing its original direction which is learning history for history’s sake.

While the search for the right content and the dialogue about the extent to which history education can serve other subjects outside history proper is ongoing, there are other aspects of history education considered important. The discussion with history teachers on the 27th of July revealed that there is an eagerness to explore the methodology of history teaching more and to share experience with colleagues from other regions of the world, especially Europe. It was also evident that the work of EUROCLIO is well respected, but not fully understood. This opens up a very good possibility for a cooperation of NAHF and EUROCLIO in the area of teacher training. Such trainings might, at some point in the future, include participants from other countries of North East Asia.



Tea Ceremony (Image provided by Marios Epaminondas)

6. Conclusions

History education in South Korea has received special attention during the last years because it is perceived to be closely related with the (re)search and the transmission of the “right content” regarding the past of Northeast Asia. Dealing with the past seems to be, for many Korean stakeholders, a moral, political and scientific obligation to counter unacceptable claims made by Japanese and Chinese authorities. This historiographical struggle is related indirectly but obviously to current political disputes about territory and sovereignty especially with Japan. The optimum scenario, according to the

South Korean view, as portrait by speakers in the NAHF conference, is to reach “shared perceptions” of Northeast Asia, which will be accepted and adopted by Korea, Japan and China. It is understandable that this is easier said than done. There is an explicit worry that Japanese and Chinese authorities are reluctant to move towards this direction and a more implicit that should such a dialogue takes place, Korea cannot make “compromises” which are unacceptable. There is also an interrelated, pending question: will the final outcome of the aspired dialogue be a commonly endorsed narrative or the acceptance of the existence of different perspectives and an effort to learn to deal with them?

History education in South Korea is perceived and practiced as a potent way for the development of national identity and the promotion of civic competences. Learning history is about learning who “we” are, where we came from and where we should go. It is also a way to enhance social cohesion by establishing a common ground as regards to the country’s past and its relation to its neighbours. This is especially the case with children of defectors from North Korea who are welcomed to the country as compatriots but have learned a different history about Korea. In South Korea, like elsewhere, History Education is approached as a citizenship related subject. At the same time, there is an ongoing discussion about the extent to which History Education can “serve” the promotion of active citizenship without compromising its “integrity” as a subject.

While the attention was drawn to History Education because of content related controversies, new issues are brought to the foreground as soon as the issue begins to be tackled. There is a salient interest among history teachers, which is gaining ground, for better ways to teach history. A tendency for the adoption of history teaching methods which promote historical understanding, student’s agency, the use of sources and generally a more democratic, constructivist approach to learning is visible. As many of the speakers of the conference have highlighted, examples of “how to teach history” from other places in the world are welcomed. EUROCLIO’s work is appreciated and there is an eagerness to learn more about how history can be taught and learned especially in areas which have suffered from or are

experiencing conflict. In this dialogue, South Korea seems to have the willingness to share and to learn.

References:

All references stated in these blogposts are from the Publication “The NAHF – Euroclio Joint Conference on History Education: Multiperspectivity and Tolerance in History Teaching”.NAHF-Euroclio 2017”

It includes the following speeches:

- Lyu, Seunreul (Kangwon National Univeristy), “Current Issues in History Education and response efforts in Korea”, p. 39-47.
- Juhyun, Park (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation), Issues and Challenges of History Education in Europe and South Korea, p. 51-53
- Lee, Mimi (Hongik University), “Current Issues in History Education in South Korea and Europe-Questions for Discussion, p. 57-58
- Kang Sun Joo (Gyeongin National University of Education, “History Teaching in Republic of Korea: Curriculum and Practice”, p. 61-75
- Chai, Hyun Jin (Hangyeore High School), Developing a History Textbook for North Korean defector students: Introducing a different approach to Korean History.
- Yi Yeonhee (Teacher at Chunghyun Middle School), “The significance and implementation of History classes for Peace and Coexistence: The case of Korea. p. 153-157
- Kim Jin-sook (Researcher, Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation), “Challenges in History Education in preparation for Korean Unification, p. 161-163
- Kim, Han Jong (Korea National University of Education), “Strategies to develop Korean History subject matter for Civic History Education, p. 177-189

This concludes the report on Marios Epaminondas’ study visit to Seoul. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

[Understanding Your Own History through Education – Part I](#)

Ineke Veldhuis-Meester September 28, 2017

This is the first installment of a blogpost on Ineke Veldhuis-Meesters study visit to Calcutta, India, which took place from 6 – 13 November 2016. It is the sixth article in a series of reports and blogposts related to the project “Dealing with the Past in

History Education". The preceding blogpost on Marios Epaminondas' visit to Korea can be found [here](#).

Report by Ineke Veldhuis-Meester EUROCLIO Ambassador to the PeaceWorks Directorate and to the Board and Secretariat of EUROCLIO

PeaceWorks hosted me, Ineke Veldhuis-Meester, EUROCLIO Ambassador and former Senior Lecturer in History Education at Groningen University, The Netherlands, from 6 to 13 November as part of a study visit which included the International Conference on Teaching History titled 'The Idea of Nationalism', from 10 – 12 November 2016 in Calcutta. During the full three conference days I could engage with educators from all over the subcontinent, teachers, speakers, and artists from different parts of India and from the two bordering countries Bangladesh and Pakistan. It was striking that some persons coming from the border area with Pakistan were not at the conference. They had been refused a visa to cross the border due to the ongoing conflicts at the Line of Control in Kashmir, a difficulty we experienced at some EUROCLIO conferences. The conference atmosphere was warm and informal, the floor was open to a manifold of concepts, thoughts and opinions, backed up by research or experience. Each day, discussion in groups was embedded in the reflection rounds and during the meals. What creates a sense of belonging in a so religiously, ethnically and ideologically diverse thinking people? And how can very distinctive nationalist models in society coexist with blurred visions? It made me think of Benedict Anderson's imagined communities. Would it be possible that all can shelter under the 'umbrella concept' of 'civic nationalism' for which professor Anil Sethi entered a plea? It gave me hope: perhaps it could serve as a practical start.

Prior to the conference I got the chance to interact with teachers and students in schools. PeaceWorks organised five highly interesting visits to very different schools/learning Institutions, all part of their network. Programme Officer Paroma Sengupta, accompanied me at the visits, supported by Subhadrika Sen. Our welcome was a heart-warming experience! It was obvious that students and teachers were well known to Paroma by the way she was greeted. I actually tasted the reality of a common school day in a genuinely open atmosphere. Director and staff were very willing to show and explain their plans, visions, solutions and practice. The students were so open to communicate with that it did not seem like it was a first meeting. We started with a talk with the principal/director and one or more leading teachers of the history or social studies department. Subsequently, a staff member accompanied us to show the school and visit parts of several lessons, before I could engage in a talk with teachers and students.

At the Modern Academy of Continuing Education, I introduced EUROCLIO in 10 minutes and subsequently I conducted a 90 minutes' workshop for local teachers and teacher trainees on EUROCLIO's methodology. In groups of 4/5 they worked hard and had a lively discussion about which concepts and key events of 20th century India to select and how to teach them, especially when there was no agreement on a topic. The teachers and teacher trainees were eager to continue to deliberate and discuss, even though they overran the scheduled time of the workshop. It was also a great experience to meet them again at the conference.

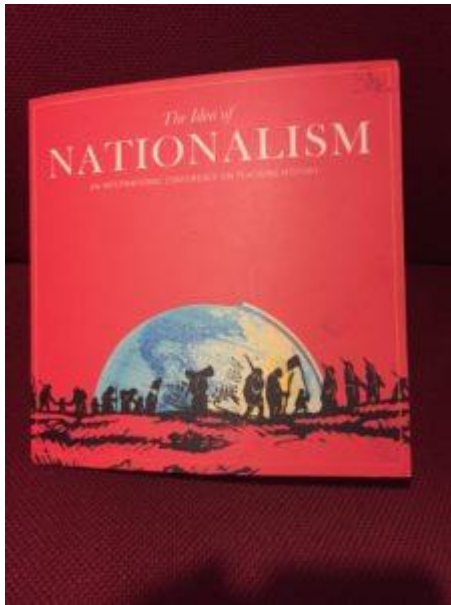
At the conference I presented EUROCLIO's mission and approach, under the title 'History Education- A mirror of pride and pain? In those three days I learned about views on nationalism in the region and heard about policies, noticed the challenges of teaching ideas and different models of nationalism, so different from the European context. Being the only person from Europe I could ask and suggest viewpoints now and then in the discussions following the presentations. In the special reflection groups, I could engage with other participants each day. I saw these reflection groups as an asset for all participants to really get in touch with people's different experiences and opinions in such complicated matters as teaching ideas of nationalism to better understand a person's different position. It was a highly informative and very successful experience. There is a keen interest to build on the idea of EUROCLIO in India. The study visit aimed at going to the next level; the reports of the visits to schools and the interviews with students and teachers aim to contribute to the EUROCLIO Project 'Dealing with the Past in History Education', in which the director of PeaceWorks herself is involved.

Report and reflections

The History Education Conference was centred on the concept of nationalism. The conference was constructed very well, guiding the thoughts of participants from theoretic concepts to practice in universities, schools, and politics in society. Speeches alternated with discussions and debates in smaller group reflection rounds, accompanied by another speaker in each round.

This first day, I gained many insights. And most remarkable for me was the influence of the colonial period on the constructs of nationalism and the pain of the partition from 1947 on. The effects of partition are still felt today as is the pain of 'the war of 1971' – differently named in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi textbooks. Secondly the fact that there are so many diverse peoples and languages in the subcontinent, who have different histories and have been approached and used differently by the British. The openness of the participants towards me struck me as well; teachers of schools I visited the days before, introduced me to colleagues, and the teacher trainees who visited the workshop sought my company.

The second day dealt with nationalism and Leftists. Society and government were topics in the ensuing lively discussion. In the keynote address, professor of history at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Janaki Nair, reported what happened when they introduced a methodological change from a straight narrative to the introduction of sources and interpretation at schools. The changes were introduced in 2005 in the textbooks developed by the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training). Students should research, read and write, debate and discuss. But students and teachers were not familiar with a more thematic textbook with more uncertain answers, it led to confusion and some lack of understanding about the curriculum demanded. The relative unpreparedness of teachers and students alike made them look for the pillars of knowledge: that was just the counter effect of what was aimed for. Janaki Nair went on to discuss the events that took place in JNU in February 2016.



Booklet on “The Idea of Nationalism” (Image provided by Ineke Veldhuis-Meester)

In this context I quote prof. Janaki Nair: “The JNU wanted critical thinking but not the sentiment. However, the predicament of history in India is that it is in the public domain.” The Teach-ins called virulently for respect for listening. “There is much to be gained by listening”. It was such a fascinating story of protest and brave determination to bring about a debate, and perseverance, despite police presence. These ‘JNU Alternative Classroom’ lectures on the historical theories of Indian and non-Indian post-colonial nationalism were spoken partly in English, partly in Hindi and recorded on You Tube. I was so intrigued by this process of debating the challenges of nationalism in public, in spite of the critics from the side of university to government and media, that when I arrived back home, I viewed all the English spoken lectures on You Tube. Deeply impressed, I realised how incomparable the processes of nation building in India and Europe are. And at the same time I recognised comparable phenomena: also in European history, nationalists pick out the parts of

history that suit the creation of their myths and support their power, or even invent them, from the 19th century until present day. Janaki Nair told us that questions were raised such as: Can nationalism solve the casts issue [for Europe the class issue], the multi-linguistic problem, the multi-ethnic issue? Is the nation the same as the state? What about the government? What is the role of the military in protecting the nation? And how do we teach to children the dilemma of the different concepts of nationalism, when they hear at home THE one vision of their parents or group nationalism?

Professor Anil Sethi pleaded in his talk “Is Nationalism a dubious Construct?” for adaptation of an inclusive concept of civic nationalism in which belonging is the ‘civicness’ of the sovereign people. This concept takes nationalism away from violence and war seeking concepts of religious, ethnic and ideological nationalism and down the civic nationalist route. At our reflection table he warned that you need to work on it constantly to create inclusive values by being politically vigilant and developing a critical attitude toward the state as a good patriot. He spoke about ‘enfranchising’, I think it meant here emancipating the ‘lower class people’ and giving them a position as citizens with a voice.

At the end of the day the author Jerry Pinto illuminated in a humorous story, Bollywood as National(ist) Cinema, the influence of popular culture on your idea of nationalism. How the images in romantic films imperceptibly creep in your mind, like the ‘Mother India’ image as the all-sacrificing woman, or what the picture means of a girl saying ‘No’ to a man: ‘only that she needs to be persuaded’. This is what I remember, the audience recognised every characteristic, as proved by bursts of laughter. The last lecture by Deepa Sreenivas titled ‘Sculpting the Citizen: History, Pedagogy and the Amar Chitra Katha’ explained how well known illustrated books for children- the Amar Chitra Katha series- contribute to recovering Indian tradition for middle class children.

This second day ended with another aspect of the Indian history: a ceremony on the premises of a government building, a speech by the cultural historian and culture secretary, Jawhar Sircar, on The Slow Silent Emergence of a pan-Indian National Identity. I felt we were taken back to the first years after the old colonial times. The speech was held in memory of Maulana Azad, a political leader of the Indian independence movement and the first minister of Education under Nehru. Afterwards we were treated to delicious Indian food on the balcony of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Museum devoted to Maulana Azad. The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) hosted the dinner and talk. It was a special Indian cultural evening.

The third day was devoted to “Thinking Beyond Borders”, introduced by a keynote address of Malini Sur, a senior research fellow at the Western Sydney University, on the Bangladeshi-Indian border. Under the heading Nationalism, Borders and Construction: Voices from the Ground the rest of the day was devoted to oral histories of the border areas and visual stories articulated in graphic novels, film and popular (calendar) art. What was similar, what was different and why? It was obvious that in India there are hardly any public Muslim images and no references to politics, but multiple Hindu religious figures are depicted, connected with Indian nationhood and strength. In Pakistan, posters depict the typical father of the nation images or present day views of the ancient religious cities.

The last reflection round concentrated on what to take home, how to bring the multiple perspectives of the topic ‘nationalism’ into the classroom. Valuable suggestions were given, e.g. initiatives for exchange of programmes via internet, interviewing each other over the border, developing learning exercises about the same film or video material on both sides of the border that would itself lead to more different opinions allowing for discussion.

In conclusion of this first part of the blogpost: The study visit was a great and successful learning adventure, with school visits as a highlight. I was very happy with the varied selection of the schools. I learned a lot about needs and practices of the schools according to their different systems and different socio-economic backgrounds. I felt especially inspired by what I saw happening in the schools, by their staff’s endeavours, by the positive atmosphere in all five institutions I visited. I experienced schools with happy children and energetic staff members, who aimed at teaching their pupils/students knowledge and understanding in a very stimulating manner. It also covered children of varying ages and social backgrounds to develop their talents and acquire skills to become worthwhile citizens. Through this process, understanding your own history and knowing something about world history was considered an essential element. The intellectual atmosphere and debate without inhibitions as well as the cordial way of receiving me in their midst made the conference for me not only a source of learning but also a joy to attend.

Groningen, 20 February 2017, part I

This concludes first part on the report of Ineke Veldhuis-Meesters study visit to Calcutta. A more detailed report on the school visits and question and answer rounds will be available in the second part of this blogpost. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the

Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

Understanding Your Own History through Education – Part II

Inkeke Veldhuid-Meester October 4, 2017

This is the second installment of a blogpost on Ineke Veldhuis-Meesters study visit to Calcutta, India, which took place from 6 – 13 November 2016. It is the seventh article in a series of reports and blogposts related to the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”. The preceding blogpost of Ineke’s visit can be found [here](#).

Part II. School visits and workshop

Context on Calcutta and the Education System in India

Located in the eastern part of India, Calcutta is the capital and administrative center of the state of West Bengal. The former capital of British India, Calcutta is a veritable melting pot of cultures. The diverse nature of the city is reflected in the education system. As with every state in India, there are schools in the city that are affiliated to the State Board and offer a syllabus designed for the state, by the state. The other boards of education are the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). These three main boards of education differ from one another in terms of content, modes of examination and assessment. The city of Calcutta also has around 300 state-recognized *madrassas*, or Islamic religious schools. To add to this already fascinating mix, the language of instruction differs too. In some, it is Bengali, which is the predominant language spoken in West Bengal, in some it is English and in some it is Urdu or Hindi. There is also a large non-formal school system that runs in tandem with the formal private and public schools.

(Drawn from M. Malhorta, 2016 study visit folder)

1. Visit to Akshar Inclusive School

Akshar (‘Alphabet’ in Sanskrit) is the first inclusive school in Calcutta. It was started in 1998 by the Rajpal Khullar Trust to fulfill the need to establish an institute that benefits children with borderline special needs. As a rule, the school admits five special needs students on an average per class, who are seated between the other children. While there are teachers trained in special education to give individualized care to the students who need it, each class also has teachers who assist students with special needs, helping them out with whatever they require during a regular class. The school offers the Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (ICSE) board for the mainstream classes, and the Open Basic Education (OBE) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) curricula for those with special needs. The academic level is the O-level (like in the British system). The government recognizes

the School Leaving Certificates. There are 17,000 of these schools in India, as per the information from the principal Mrs Noni Khular. Before I witnessed classes with Grade eight and Grade seven, I was shown around the school and introduced to educators—both special educators as well as those teaching the regular classes.

What struck me immediately in Akshar was the happy atmosphere, the happy children, the encouraging inclusiveness – really Impressive. 20% of the pupils have disabilities such as Down syndrome, physical and mental handicaps, ADHD, dyslexia, autism or Asperger. Ms. Noni Khullar, the principal and Co-Founder of the Akshar School explained her philosophy. The mainstream children will learn from the lesser-abled – how they strive to achieve their goals despite limitations (*See picture of the school's magazine 'Mentor' with principal*). They will grow up to be sensitive and compassionate children with sound humane values, who have known students with challenges and are friends with them. Students with disabilities are also challenged by the teachers to prepare them to deal with the real world outside the school environment and are taught how to deal with success and failure.

I was enthusiastic about what I saw and heard: how they practice what they talk about and how they achieve to be such a happy school community. I admire the strong principal and her able staff – an experience I took home.

I attended history class with Grade eight, 13 year olds and Grade seven, 12 year olds.

In both classes in an instructional conversation history was taught as events and facts to know and understand; the teacher explains and asks questions and always relate the historical content to India today. So *Historical Significance* came in: “What is nationalism today, what about the individuality of a nation in the present context?” – Questions to think about. It was in an agreeable and relaxed learning atmosphere.

In answer of my question on how 13 year-olds perceive the history lessons:

Most said that they like history because they can learn about the past, want to know how life was in the past, and also because their teacher is entertaining. And they could learn about the history of other countries, e.g. in Europe.

2. Visit to Calcutta International School

Calcutta International School (CIS) is the first school in the city to offer the GCSE syllabus recognized by Indian Boards. The Cambridge International AS and A levels are offered here as well.

The CIS caters to a large cross section of students from Calcutta as well as children of expatriates. Founded in 1953 for the British expatriates, the school has 17 nationalities of students. I was shown around the school by Ms Tina Servaia, history teacher in the middle and senior school and also member of the Advisory Board of History for Peace. The School has good resources. I did not visit classes but in a separate room I had ample time to engage with students and later teachers. At the

end of the visit I had a conversation with the Principal Dr. Nath about the level of students, teachers and the education in her school and about training opportunities for her teachers.

Eight students from the AS, A2 and IB classes, , 16 to 18 year olds, who have taken up humanities and history, sat around a table for nearly half an hour with me.

They shared their experiences of studying in a school that has a different curriculum and a different teaching methodology than most other schools in the rest of the country. They recognized that the curriculum itself offers a lot of freedom in terms of analysis and interpretation of texts. The students enjoy their history classes particularly because of the freedom given to them to discuss, analyze and debate. They are curious to know what happened in world affairs in historical, economic and sociological aspects. "There are events in the past related to the political, ideological and religious conflicts we want to know and understand: History is (connected to) current affairs". The students are keen to find out what happened, in this way: "Give us a lot of sources and five perspectives, let us research to find out what happened, discuss what could have happened, and to see how other countries "have become different". It was a lovely conversation with these 16 to 18 year olds on a quite high analytical level. "Humanities is less structured than science, so you can think more openly". The students were enthusiastic to share why they liked the subject. There was such a free and enthusiastic atmosphere, amongst the eager and intelligent students, who "see the subject history as analysis". The question about 'difficult history' seemed irrelevant to them. "Nothing is difficult, if you analyse," they said in their youthful enthusiasm.

3. Visit to the Modern High School for Girls

The Modern High School for Girls was founded by Mrs B.M. Birla in 1952. Mrs. Birla came from a leading industrialist family and the school at that time set a revolutionary example in the area of women's education. The school offers the Indian Certificate for Secondary Education curriculum to their students.

Dr. Devi Kar, the Director (and former Principal), Ms. Damayanti Mukherjee, Principal and Ms. Amita Prasad, the Vice- Principal gave me a friendly welcome. Dr Kar spoke to me in detail about the ethos of the school. A school that combines the best from the East and the West, with a principal who stood outside the regional rivalry. The school calls itself an 'All Faith school'. After 35 years of rule by an American missionary, Dr. Kar succeeded as the third Principal in the school's history and the first of Indian origin. Dr. Kar and the vice-principal Ms. Amita Prasad challenged me in a talk about Sam Wineburg's 'historical thinking' ideas. Dr. Kar was really engaged, and also attended the EUROCLIO presentation and the first part of the workshop the following day. On the first day of the conference she led a panel discussion on how to translate theories on nationalism into the school practice.

I was able to attend two history classes, for Grade 10 and Grade 12. For Grade 10 Ms. Sunita Biswas taught a class on Gandhi. Ms Biswas used a video clip of Gandhi being interviewed by a US journalist as well as an audio clip of a narration of a poem by Tagore. The class was captivated by the images and by the reciting voice. Subsequently she handed out the text of the poem which she asked the students to

read and reflect on. Both of these teaching tools fed effectively into a discussion on Nationalism vis-à-vis Patriotism.

The students reflected on Sam Wineburg's philosophy: they thought historically and explained that history was in some ways challenging, while being complex, multifaceted, one opinion never prevails. That was the product of the watchful guidance of good teachers, who stimulate and get their students engaged in research.

The team of history teachers share the same aims but they teach in different styles. Dr Kar gives her teachers freedom because she trusts them, she said; which is indicative of an open learning atmosphere in the school. The teachers spoke about influence of the parties on the National Curriculum Board and how the Board influences the selection of topics. The most difficult aspect was seen as: how to handle the changes in perspectives. "History is all around us, it is the basis of all other disciplines".

4. Workshop at the Modern Academy of Continuing Education (MACE)

'History Education- A mirror of pride and pain?' - Workshop at Modern Academy of Continuing Education.



From Paroma Sengupta's Report.

Ineke began with a presentation on what history means to different people and how as history teachers it becomes important to take the different perceptions into account. Some of the participants spoke about biased perceptions of history in the subcontinent. What was interesting was that both students (senior students from Modern High School) and teachers had very similar points to make regarding bias and how textbooks reflect the inherent bias of the author of the textbook and the politics of the nation at the time of writing the book.

Ineke Veldhuis-Meester at the workshop at Modern Academy of Continuing Education (image provided by Ineke Veldhuis-Meester)

Participants were grouped into 5 groups of 4-5 each for the activity, which was an exercise on how different perceptions can be, even among teachers. The teachers were asked to, first individually think of events that shaped the country. The process was then repeated, in pairs and then a larger group. The participants had to work as a group to reach a consensus, as the number of events allowed per group was limited. Interestingly, the activity started off with many participants agreeing with each other, but as the groups became larger it apparently became harder to agree! At the end of the allotted time, the participants presented

their work, having recorded points on charts. Some of the common events chosen included partition and the Swadeshi movement. One of the groups mentioned ‘the emergence of a national identity’ in relation to the struggle for Independence.

May I add as author of the report, that it was a joy to me to work with such motivated teachers and trainees, who were open-minded, asked without reluctance, debated and thought deeply while constructing different kind of basic curriculum frames. One of the groups did not jot down events, but concepts: “as events develop out of concepts.” The participants were given a hand out at the end of the workshop to enhance the effectiveness of the workshop as a basis for continuing the discussion together.

Groningen, 13 February 2017, part 2

This blogpost concludes the report of Ineke Veldhuis-Meesters study visit to Calcutta. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

[Dealing with Croatia’s Difficult Past in History Education – Part I](#)

Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk October 6, 2017

This is the first part of a report made by Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk on their study visit to Croatia. It is the eighth article in a series of blogposts and reports on all study visits made for the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”. In this project civil society actors from different backgrounds, visit schools and institutions in countries that are struggling with a difficult past. The previous article in this series of Ineke Veldhuis-Meesters’ visit to Calcutta, India, can be found [here](#).

Report of the international study visit Croatia

As members of EUROCLIO’s Dealing with the Past Project (DwP) team, Olesya Skrypnyk (Nova Doba, Ukraine) and Clara Ramírez Barat (AIPR, Brazil office) travelled to Croatia from January 30th to February 1st 2017. In three days, one in Zagreb and two in Split, they met with several civil society actors, state institutions representatives, teachers, and students to learn about how the difficult past is taught in schools, and to discuss the practical challenges involved in dealing with conflicting memories and emotional histories in the classroom. This report briefly summarizes the discussions they held during those days and outlines the main findings of the study visit.

Day 1: Monday 30 January

On the morning of January 30th, the DwP team had a combined meeting with Documenta and Youth Initiative for Human Rights, two NGOs that work with different aspects of dealing with the past in the country, especially in regards to the adoption of transitional justice measures and the promotion of non-recurrence. After a brief introduction to the work of both organizations, the discussion centred on the question of how, in their views, history education could help better deal with the difficult past in Croatia. As organizations trying to advance human rights issues in Croatia in relation to the war, however, they found it was very challenging to pursue their mission in the country today and that most of their perspectives were not widely shared by the society.

For both organizations, when it comes to education about the recent history, it is important to begin by recognizing that having a certain narrative about what happened is unavoidable. Facts just don't stand alone. In this respect, for them, one of the biggest challenges today is that Croatia is still a young nation, and hence identity and tradition play a key role in the ongoing state building project. According to them, in broad terms, history education is not being taught today primarily with the intention of dealing with the past, but rather to teach young people the narrative of how Croatia became an independent nation.

When it comes to better understanding the War of Independence, its causes, how it unfolded, and its consequences, both organizations considered that the topic is not adequately covered in the school curricula. History classes normally end with the story of World War II, and only when a teacher is especially interested, students will learn more about Yugoslavia and the Independence War. They also noted the scarcity of pedagogical material to help teachers and students to critically learn about these topics. Learning from real sources and being exposed to different perspectives is rare, and besides the mandatory visit to Vukovar, there are almost no extra-curricular activities (like visits to memorials or museums) to complement what is taught in the classroom.

The second meeting was held at the Memorial–Documentation Center for the Homeland War (CDMCHW), a state scientific institution and specialized archive run by the Ministry of Culture. Its mission is to preserve, document, and research the history of the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995). As part of its mission, the Center organizes exhibitions and public lectures and actively cooperates with educational institutions (both public and private) throughout the country to help them better understand and convey the recent Croatian national history, especially the War of Independence and its consequences. With the support of the National Agency of Education, for example, they organize an annual seminar for teachers about the Homeland War. The seminar, which is done in a voluntary basis, gathers more than 100 teachers from all over Croatia every year.

For the staff at the CDMCHW, the war is a subject well covered by the current Croatian history curricula. As an archive, which collects and preserves a myriad of documents of the war, when it comes to history, “the facts” are more important than understanding the narratives built. While they recognize experiences are different, as historians, they think their capacity to interpret those experiences is limited—the goal is rather to have to all the facts from both sides of the war and write about the events only based on these facts. Still, they recognize that there are divisions in Croatia

today on how the recent history is interpreted, which go back to the time of World War II and the Communist time.

Day 2: Tuesday 31 January

The first meeting on this day was held at the University of Split. The DwP team visited the History Department and had a discussion with a group of professors and students (members of History Students' association).

A professor of the department gave a presentation, which listed a number of the most sensitive issues in Croatian contemporary history and presented the following essential ways to better deal with them:



Classroom discussion at the University of Split (Image provided by Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk)

- Taking into account different perspectives and interpretations in the study program;
- Students' critical thinking in learning and teaching history;
- Students' independent participation in the reconstruction of historical events;
- Importance of micro-history approach in outlining the impact of war [Croatian War of Independence] on civilian population and everyday life;
- Making victims lists and referring with respect and dignity to every victim regardless of his/her nationality or political views;
- Encouraging students to engage in extra-curricular activities (e.g. work with additional sources).

After presentation, the students and the professors joined a discussion on the topic of the challenges of a difficult past in history education in Croatia, whether there are enough materials on the recent history in the school curricula, and how the History department members deal with the challenges of emotional histories.

The students pointed out the main problems with teaching of recent Croatian history:

- It is politically and ideologically biased;
- There still is a "strong impact of collective memory."

The students also mentioned that they wanted to be given real facts while studying difficult history. They also felt they should learn more about the Croats crimes and what they "did wrong." In their view, the topic of the Croatian War of Independence is not sufficiently represented in school textbooks. Regarding their school years, they admitted that students very often got information about the war events from their families or mass media, which were not objective.

One of the professors considered that today there was a wide consensus about how to perceive the Homeland War in Croatia, but recognized that there is still a problem with the interpretation of WWII that splits the nation.

This blogpost concludes the first part of the report of this study visit to Croatia. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

[Dealing with Croatia’s Difficult Past in History Education – Part II](#)

Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk October 9, 2017

This is the second part of a report made by Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk on their study visit to Croatia. It is the ninth article in a series of blogposts and reports on all study visits made for the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”. In this project civil society actors from different backgrounds, visit schools and institutions in countries that are struggling with a difficult past. The first part of this blogpost can be found [here](#).

Continuation of the report

Day 2: Tuesday 31 January

After the conversation in the University the DwP team visited the City Museum of Split. Opened to the public in 1992, in a palace that was built in the 15th century. The Museum exhibits the cultural and historical heritage of the city through a stunning collection of artwork (including fragments of monuments and statues that were once parts of buildings in Split) together with numerous documents, photographs, maps and manuscripts that tell the story of the city. After the visit, the DwP team met with one of the museum educators and another educator from the Maritime Museum to learn about their perspectives on the challenges of conveying to young people the recent and difficult history of the country.

As a historical museum, the City Museum of Split, however, does not cover the most recent period of the country’s history. As a matter of fact, from the different museums in Split, it is only the Maritime Museum that includes the history of the 20th Century in its exhibition. According to the Maritime Museum educator, a historian by training, it is difficult to explain the history of World War II and the Independence War to the kids that come to visit the museum. This is even more the case when it comes to students coming from Slavonia, a region from the Eastern part of the country near the border with Serbia, not only because the war was especially felt in that area, but also because the classes are mixed, with both Croatian and Serbian students. Indeed, she had sometimes been warned by teachers to be careful on how she explained this period to them, and to limit her introduction to the basics—the terrible consequences of the war—without entering into details about the causes and the way the war unfolded. She noted that while often students are surprised when they

hear about the war, it is important that students today learn about the recent history of the country. Having worked in the museum for five years, she commented that the memory of the war is fading, becoming less important with each generation that passes, and she worries that students today don't get much exposure to it in the school curricula. She mentioned that while the war is briefly touched upon in primary school, students don't really learn about it until they are 15 years old. However, this is only if they go to high school, as those who attend technical schools won't learn more about it in school.

After the visit to the Museum, in the afternoon, the DwP team went to visit Visoka, a primary school in the city of Split, to discuss with the students why for them it is important to learn history, and to find out what they learn about the difficult history of Croatia in school and what more would they like to know about it. In general the kids agreed that studying history was important to understand the present time, to know more about their country and the society in which they live today.

As students in 8th grade, they were planning a mandatory school visit in March to Vukovar, a city that was completely destroyed during the war. They were excited about the trip and expressed eagerness to learn more about the "heroes that defended the country" and about the consequences of the war. When asked why they thought it was hard to talk about these topics in the classroom, they mostly agreed it was because the events are still very close, and many people suffered. All of them know someone who lost a member of their family in the war, and thus for them it is still a very painful history to remember, even if they didn't live during the war themselves.

Through the conversation, they also recognized that it is still not that common among Croatian kids to have Serbian friends (only some of them did), but they expressed complete normality about the idea of meeting Serbian kids, as they thought the war caused pain on all sides and keeping hatred for what happened won't solve problems but just prolong them in time. One student even said that Serbian kids

learn history from a different perspective than the one that they do, and that is something that has to be acknowledged and respected.



Classroom discussion (Image provided by Clara Ramírez Barat and Olesya Skrypnyk)

Next, the DwP team visited a history lesson in Prva Gimnazija, a high school in the city of Split. The teacher gave a presentation drawing parallels between the bombing of Guernica, in Spain (1937) and Vukovar, Croatia (1991). After that, the class joined a discussion on the problem of the difficult past in recent Croatian history. The teacher admitted that he remembered "that time" [War of Independence] and that for him it was not easy to teach his students

about it without emotions, although he also asserted that he tried his best to be objective so the students could better understand the situation, including the consequences of the war.

Despite the fact that the high school students were born in the late 1990s and didn't experience the war, they generally agreed that it had a huge impact on them. The students hadn't covered the theme of the Croatian War of Independence before the study visit was held, but they spoke about how they learned about the events from the family – their fathers participated in the war (though, one of the students mentioned that her father never spoke about his memories of the war). Among other sources of information about the war they listed school trips to Vukovar, documentaries and professors' lectures.

Young people expressed the desire to be given a full picture of the war events because "if you have knowledge, you cannot be manipulated by newspapers," to have more classes on these topics, and to develop critical thinking. Media and politicians, in their view, are responsible for the feeling that almost all of them bear inside – "mistrust towards the Serbs." However, some of the students said that they had friends or relatives in Serbia. One of the students shared her experience of participation in a TV show competition that had taken place in Serbia. Despite her own fears, and the fears of her family before the trip, Serbian people were friendly and kind to them, and she was very pleased to have had the opportunity to be confronted with such a reality.

Day 3: Wednesday 1 February

On February 1st the DwP team had a visit to the Radić Brothers Primary School in Bračević. They had meetings with the pupils of two classes (one of them consists only two students).

In the first meeting, answering the question why it is important to learn history, the students admitted the following:

- Need to know more about what happened in the past [in order not to repeat it in the future];
- Importance of having own opinion;
- War is not a solution, and has serious consequences (destroyed buildings, psychological problems of former soldiers);
- Enjoying the history classes.

Speaking about the recent past, the students admitted that they lacked the information in the textbooks. Usually teachers "tell the things which are not in the textbook." They also learn from the TV programmes and search for information on the Internet (e.g. witnesses of Vukovar, events in Bleiburg and Jasenovac). Sometimes their parents tell "some things" (e.g. not only Serbian soldiers committed crimes during the war), and they discuss the topic among themselves as well.

Like their peers from primary school Visoka, pupils in Bračević were looking forward to visiting Vukovar, learning how people had lived there during the war, and seeing the hospital [memorial], which would help them to "protect our country".

The teacher told the team about the school projects: one with the Serbian kindergarten, named by Nicola Tesla, and the other about Anne Frank. She mentioned those projects aimed to prevent war.

The second meeting was held with the class of two pupils. They considered it important to learn history, especially recent history, to know how their country came into existence. As mentioned by one of the students “we fought for it for centuries.” Speaking about what they know about the difficult history, the pupils regarded Vukovar as a “symbol of struggle.”

The students know of Vukovar and the Croatian War of Independence through different school subjects, from the history teacher, and from family members or elderly people. They also wished to have more lessons so that they could learn about the things they are interested in (e.g. WWII, its causes and consequences).

They presumed that Serbian people “are not that bad,” and one of the students said that she had contact with peers from Serbia, whose fathers belonged to the same motor-club as her father.

The teacher added that he tries not to give conclusions about what is good or bad, moral or immoral, but the facts, so that the students could make some conclusions themselves. He also admitted, that for him the most challenging period of Croatian difficult history is WWII.

This concludes the report of Clara Ramírez Barat’s and Olesya Skrypnyk’s study visit to Croatia. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

[How to Deal with Colombia’s Violent Past?](#)

Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic November 8, 2017

This is the first part of a report made by Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic on their study visit to Colombia. It is the tenth article in a series of blogposts and reports on all study visits made for the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”. In this project civil society actors from different backgrounds, visit schools and institutions in countries that are struggling with a difficult past.

For over five decades Colombia has experienced intense violence associated with multiple unresolved social and political conflict—a violence that has been changing its characteristics over the decades with regards to its agents, motivations, intensity and mechanisms. Hundreds of thousands of fatalities have occurred by massacres and assassinations. Over and above that, innumerable Colombians have become victims of forced disappearance, forced displacement, abduction, extrajudicial executions, unlawful recruitment, torture, abuse, and sexual violence. Resistance to suffering is inherent in human nature. Today in Colombia one sees a strong sense of this resistance—in political will, in civil society, in individuals. Our study visit intends

to highlight some of these efforts by individuals, civil society, education institutions and the state.

SCHOOL VISITS

Our hosts, CNMH, had selected two Colombian schools (one public and one private) as case studies for our research on dealing with difficult pasts in post conflict society. Our first visit was to the public school — Colegio Leonardo Pozada Pedraza followed by a visit to the private school— Colegio Campoalegre. Both the schools have their own approach to confront their difficult violent past along with the reality in which they live. Their approaches and methods are different, but in accordance with the needs and background of students who attend these schools.

Colegio Leonardo Pozada Pedraza uses art, literature, film and theater as a medium to educate and sensitize students about what is happening in society and how peace can be restored. Teachers Adriana Abaunza, Diana Beltrán, and Bibiana Seguro took personal initiative along with a group of students interested in the subject of human rights education to think about how school, literature, and history in Colombia have contributed to the construction of falsehoods and realities regarding human rights in the country. Looking at the concerns of young people together, they intended to propose and carry out an inter institutional forum, which would enable them to investigate and understand students' thoughts not only in the Leonardo Posada Pedraza School but also involve students from other schools and places for an open and frank dialogue in order to unearth diverse voices on the issue of human rights, Colombian literature, and school. Art is one of the most powerful means of expression and also one of the most powerful means of therapy. Engaging students in art and literature helped with dealing with individual internal conflicts, too.

They were convinced that perhaps the only way for their country to find a promising future in which citizens can have a dignified life and develop fully is through education in Human Rights. It would encourage them to relate to their environment and thus reduce intolerance and levels of violence. However, this process of educating in human values must be initiated at home and it must be strengthened in the school if it were to have far reaching consequences. This important realization has made the government and public educational policy makers' work with greater focus and invited Colegio Leonardo Pozada Pedraza for human rights training .The project has been very successful and the work continues. In 2016 another new project began— Youth Thinking about Peace (Los jovenes se piensan La Paz). The goal of this project was to reconstruct the past to develop critical thinking by researching and writing about all the actors of the conflict including the perpetrators, the victims, the para military, and the guerillas. We interacted with the students and found that they welcome this activity and enjoy working on the project. They were extremely interested, curious, articulate, and active during the dialogue session as well.

The other visit to a private school Colegio Campoalegre was a very different experience. In every imaginable way the two schools were different from each other. At Colegio Campoalegre the first impression was that of affluence. Set in an extremely picturesque surrounding with mountains you could touch by simply leaning out of the classroom window, this school simply took our breath away at first glance. The physical difference aside, after interaction with the students, we found the same level of interest and passion in the projects they were involved in as the students of Leonardo Posada.



Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic at Colegio Campoalegre (Picture provided by Meena Pankaj Malhotra)

The project being implemented here is based on the premise of lived experience that brings about a genuine deep change from within. Developed and led by the individual passion of just one teacher, Ana Maria Duran, it involves students travelling to El Salado, a village that was deeply effected by the conflict in 2000 and living there for a period of a week to ten days and interacting and working within the community of survivors. This first hand experience for students coming from privileged backgrounds proves to be a very valuable education.

The group that we interacted with had recently returned from their visit to the town that had been battered with violence. During their visit they helped build four dry toilets on sidewalks that do not have access to water supply. They donated school desks, soccer uniforms, and other useful items. They interacted with members of the community, learning about their traditions and culture, their music, and their very difficult past. The students were received by the locals as if they were old friends and Lucho Torres, icon of the town, personally accompanied them around town, telling them the history of this corregimiento where 1500 people live and are with great resilience building a future on the ashes of their difficult past.

Late February 2000 the town experienced almost two weeks of torture, beheading, and rape of an undetermined number of defenseless peasants, including a six-year-old girl and a woman of 65. Perpetrated by at least 450 men belonging to the paramilitary group that also destroyed the houses and the commerce of the population, this is one of the ugliest massacres in the country's violent past.

Personally coming face to face with a history that they had so far only learned about objectively made the students introspective and encouraged them to actually analyse what they came back with. One of the students who was the daughter of a military member recounted how throughout childhood she felt deprived because her father was always away on work. Her father had eventually been killed due to the conflict, and she carried deep feelings of anger due to this loss. The visit to El Salado, she

said to us, made her understand the true meaning of forgiveness. She realised there were hundreds like her who had experienced loss, and who was to judge and decide what justice meant under circumstances of this nature.

This project which is implemented as part of the Social Responsibility and Social Pedagogical approach of the school has been extremely successful and they plan to continue this with each group of Grade 10 students.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

One of the visits on our study trip was to the Ministry of Education in Bogota, Colombia. We spoke with a group of seven people who work directly with the Minister of Education on formulating policy, pedagogy processes, best practice etc. We began the meeting by explaining the background of our visit and why we chose Colombia. Senada and I come from a background where working with government is really not the easiest of options. Having already been exposed to the workings of civil society and education institutes over the past two days we were extremely curious about the realities in Colombia. Our primary question to the ministry related to the symbiosis between the government and civil society. We enquired about the structures that are in place and interestingly Professor Chaux said he could not think of structures—he preferred thinking about people. He went on to admit that Colombia has achieved a level of cooperation between various stakeholders that surprises the world and is quite admirable. His colleagues in Canada express wonder over the ease with which researchers and the ministry function together. He has been helping the ministry for thirteen years.

We also learned about the autonomous nature of the workings of the Ministry. While this can be a very useful reality, in Colombia this is actually a cause for concern as it is leading to a huge gap between state policy and actual classroom practice. Peace Studies was made mandatory across the country and across all stages of education. However, lack of proper material and lack of any policy or guidelines related to textbook publishing have led to an overall disarray in peace and human rights education. Currently this is the ministry's prime concern and to overcome the problems in this area, they are working towards bringing together NGO's and local secretariats of education. However, because the education secretariats are decentralized, the ministry has implemented a policy of direct collaboration with civil society in order to speed up the implementation of new policies. The civil society organizations design and develop pedagogical materials based on policies and make them available for classroom use. In some cases they are also directly involved in classroom implementation. Also, teachers have taken great initiative and created many networks across the country enabling them to work together and share ideas and resources.

Colombia is very decentralised. The government does not develop a single national level curriculum. The schools do. Government has developed some guidelines which are strongly recommended, but not mandatory. The students undergo a national test that measures how they are faring in terms of the recommended guidelines. In 2004 the government developed standards for mathematics, language, natural science, social sciences, and for citizenship competencies. Students undergo tests in 5th, 9th and 11th grade that test competencies of pluralism, good citizenship, and democratic values based on the standards. The schools, local secretariats, and NGO's are

supposed to develop tools that promote competencies stated in the government guidelines. There is substantial work being done in this area but definitely not enough. There is a need for many stakeholders to work harder in this area. In 2013 a new law was implemented that made it mandatory for schools to work on preventing aggression, violence, and bullying. Those who do not are liable for legal action taken against them by any citizen. And for private schools, if protocols are not adhered to the government can revoke the school's licence. However, so far no legal action of this nature has been taken against any institution. This was followed by another law that made peace studies and human rights education mandatory since 2015. However this law was implemented without the consultation or support of the Ministry of Education, and there is a big gap between the state policy and what is actually happening on the ground. The proper tools for implementing this most recent law do not exist.

The discussion on autonomy brought us to the question of textbooks, and we discovered that there is a huge problem in this area. Schools are prescribing their own textbooks with publishers deciding what to publish in the textbooks. But often within the same region there are no similarities in what is being taught. The Ministry offers extra materials but there is no guarantee on how these materials should be used. Usage of these materials is up to individual teachers. And finally we came to the most important question—what is the Ministry's policy with regards to Colombia's conflicted past. In a post conflict society, where a classroom has students that have personal histories of either being children of victims or perpetrators, how does one deal with this and how does the history teacher deal with this? The answer according to Olga is twofold; one is the teacher's competencies. Teachers themselves have been through the violent past and in most cases have been affected by the violence and they have lived the history they are teaching. They have to build the strength and resilience to be neutral and take an unbiased position. The other aspect is the tools, material, and pedagogy. The Ministry has yet to develop these to help the teachers. In 2015 the ministry held a series of interactions with teachers to suggest how recent difficult histories may be approached in the classroom and one of the major suggestions was to start with the point in time that the students were living at the moment and then connect it backwards to the past. This is a struggle still because the peace accord is very recent—2016—and there is development in best practise related to teaching the recent difficult Colombian past. Centre for Historical Memory has done some wonderful work in this area and the Ministry is hugely inspired by the work that Facing History And Ourselves is doing and plans to pilot projects based on their approach. They hope to construct bridges between the recent and distant past by studying social dynamics and how identity plays a role as well as how prejudice functions. Their goal is to not just look at conflicts from the past but also at the stories of peaceful positive resistance.

However despite all these efforts by all stakeholders concerned, the discussion on how much to teach of the recent past and where to start continues. They have not arrived at a consensus yet.

There is a lot creativity happening in Colombia! And yet how to deal with the difficult past is not an easy question to answer. In Colombia it is currently an ongoing movement involving some very dedicated passionate people.

This concludes the first part of the report of a study visit to Colombia made by Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).

How to Deal with Colombia’s Violent Past?

Part II

Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic November 10, 2017

This is the second part of a report made by Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic on their study visit to Colombia. It is the eleventh article in a series of blogposts and reports on all study visits made for the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”. In this project civil society actors from different backgrounds, visit schools and institutions in countries that are struggling with a difficult past. For the first part of this report, please click [here](#).

Pedagogy in the MNM

During our visit to Colombia, we learned that there are a number of ways and methodologies that are being used across the country to deal with the violent past. The theme across all methodology is to keep memory alive so that it never happens again. Here museums have a very important role to play to not only institutionalize memory but also to put structures in place that transform individual memories into collective memory.

One of the most important projects of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Historia is the plan to set up a museum. Land has already been acquired for this purpose and a call for the museums architectural design has been sent out. Catalina Orozco, through her presentation, explained in detail the plans and the pedagogical approach that the museum will use to educate citizens about Colombia’s violent past.

She began the presentation by outlining the objectives of MNM:

- **Pedagogical Function**—Sensitization, Historical Analysis, Ethical Reflection
- **Clearing Function**—Truth, Responsibility, Consequences, Impacts
- **Communicative Function**—Listening, Interpreting, Debating, Inspiring, Motivating
- **Asset function**—Cultural and Environmental Collection
- **Memorial function**—Recollection, Duel, Ritual, Commemoration

Catalina spoke in great detail about the very interesting project [Volver La Mirada/ Look Back](#). This is a very layered project where the process of dealing with the past happens in an extremely systematic manner. It involves every aspect of society from the individual to the entire community, and also includes the layered approach of several positions: victims, perpetrators, students and so on.

The pedagogical function of the museum promotes the creation of a community that understands the past and seeks to transform the present. It reflects on the conditions that made the Colombian armed conflict possible and the responsibilities of the

actors who promoted it. It criticises the use of violence and sensitizes citizens to issues of violation of human rights while adapting a participatory approach to the defense of life and liberty, democracy, equity, and respect for difference.

One of the most important goals of this project is to **educate for non-repetition**. This is long term work and the process seeks to understand cultural and intergenerational dimensions from the position of various diverse actors. In order to achieve this long term goal, connections between museum, family, school, organisation, and media is essential. The priority prevent the repetition of violence. Learning for non-repetition is an approach that has two dimensions: emotive and analytical. The emotive approach uses art and the analytical approach uses historical memory. These different approaches then lead to interdisciplinary research.

These conceptual guidelines define the museum content, the languages, the educational programming, the activities, and the principles of interaction.

The pedagogy is transverse and transcends the educational, which is reflected in:

- Exhibitions
- The public area
- The organisation

The exhibitions serve as a social space shared with family, friends, and colleagues, facilitate different approaches towards disseminating information, reach out to different audiences in different ways, taking into account the various ways to build knowledge create intellectual, emotional and sensory experiences, offer the opportunity to engage visitors in everyday life, connect to a variety of sources that allow multiple readings, and offer a moving and mobilizing experience.

However the challenge with exhibitions as a medium of educating about the past is the short duration of interaction. Hence it is important to build motivation before and after activities around the exhibits.

Catalina then shared with us how they plan to counter this challenge and maximise the depth of experience for the exhibition visitors. The plan is to appoint educators and mediators at the museum. These will include victims to sensitize and inspire empathy and local interpreters to translate and establish identities thereby linking the worlds of the exhibits and the visitors as well as artists to bring creativity to the entire process.

Observatorio de Paz

One of the highlights of our study visit was meeting and interacting with Vera Grabe Loewentherz who founded Observatorio de Paz in 1996. Vera Grabe Loewentherz was a member of the Guerilla group M19—the only urban guerilla group and one that was formed by highly educated and intellectual people. Here we were interested in listening to two perspectives—the personal and the professional. We requested Vera to narrate her story and the journey of the organization she founded. In 1990 M19 surrendered arms, and Vera initially was a member of Congress in the parliament. Later she became a part of a group for human rights at the Colombian

embassy in Spain. 1996 was the turning point when she began to focus all her energies towards peace building and peace education. Having seen first-hand the breakdown of an ideology she firmly believed and the damage that it left in its wake, she now very passionately believes in promoting and invests all her energies into promoting peace. The journey from ex guerilla to peace builder has not been an easy one, she said. But she has been determined and also thought it was necessary to acquire an education on peace building so she first earned a PhD in the subject before commencing her work in this area.

Observatorio de Paz works with women in the villages and remote rural areas that were deeply affected by the armed conflict by using the powerful medium of the arts to intervene and educate the community on the values of peace. Their approach is very different, Vera says. They look at the entire process through a reverse lens by looking at conflict and violence from the spectrum of peace. She is opposed to teaching conflict and violence. “Teach peace,” she says, and through the teaching of peace, understand the context of conflict and violence.



Observatorio de Paz (Image provided by Senada Jusic)

Very often in memory work we focus too much on the negatives—it is important to focus on all the perspectives.

Observatorio de Paz's runs several projects, most of them with ex guerilla soldiers and victims. The goal is to develop the understanding that although their backgrounds and vantage points are different, they share the same issues and problems particularly pertaining to Colombian society, simply by virtue of being women. This approach helps in building an initial connection within the group. The other important issue they deal with is the circumstantial nature of life and the fact that we all may be compelled by circumstances to play multiple roles. The perpetrator can easily become a victim too! Understanding the fact that conflict and violence affects every single person in the community helps in making an individual's role more meaningful in the work for peace.

“It empowers you!” Vera believes. “Talking about violence only breaks you. You constantly feel like a victim.”

Observatorio de Paz uses diverse methods and tools in dealing with the subject of violence—different games, role play, and other activities rooted in the powerful medium of theatre.

The well designed and thought out process has several steps: conflict is studied as a scientific phenomenon, the difference between conflict and violence is understood, and the final step is teaching peace. This process is followed up by active engagement in the community.

Role play invokes empathy and helps overcome self stigma. Another important pedagogy is reconstruction. Individuals are asked to reconstruct their lives on a timeline in small groups. This helps in acknowledging other life stories, comparing them with their own, and creating bonds.

Another very important process is the use of Japanese pottery, exploiting the therapeutic powers of working with clay. In groups of 30, women work together to make pottery products which are then exhibited.

The intergenerational approach involves the sharing of life experiences, a cleansing process which is called “Irene” after the Greek Goddess of Peace. The aim here is to overcome prejudices and gain self respect and respect for each other.

Observatorio de Paz runs Peace Schools that are approved by the Ministry of Education and award their students a Bachelor degree in Peace Studies. These schools are very flexible. With their foundation based on peace, they work on preventing violence especially within violent families.

Observatorio de Paz has covered a very wide rural area with their work, but there are challenges. The most important one being funding and impact assessment. Arts intervention is a process that brings about a very deep change in individuals and society, but it is also a process that is slow, takes time, is intangible and hence difficult to assess in short durations. One very tangible outcome is the fact that the women Observatorio de Paz has worked with have become active within their communities helping take the organisations work further. Their active involvement with peace building and peace education is proof of success.

Inspired by their work, we enquired about the possibility of their pedagogy becoming a state policy in the future. Vera is quite cynical about that because she feels the state focuses on signing peace treaties rather than working on transforming attitudes of violent culture in society. Introducing these methodologies through the education system is also difficult because of the decentralized nature of the education policy in Colombia.

This concludes the the report of a study visit to Colombia made by Meena Pankaj Malhotra and Senada Jusic. This study visit has been a part of the project “Dealing with the Past in History Education”, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. For more information on this project, please visit the [project page](#).